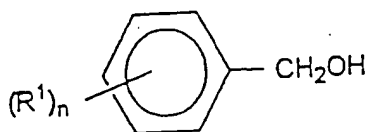


AMENDMENT TO THE CLAIMS

Claim 1 (currently amended)

A process for the preparation of an ω -benzyl ester of an amino dicarboxylic acid, comprising reacting the amino dicarboxylic acid with a benzyl alcohol derivative of the formula



I

wherein R^1 is hydrogen or is the $R^1(s)$ are individually selected from the group consisting of hydrogen, C_1 to C_4 alkyl, C_1 to C_4 alkoxy and halogen and n is 1 or 3, in the presence of at least one mol per mole of the amino dicarboxylic acid of an alkanesulfonic acid, optionally in the presence of a solvent.

Claim 2 (previously presented)

The process of Claim 1, wherein the amino dicarboxylic acid is an α -amino carboxylic acid carrying another carboxyl group attached to a carbon other than that in the α position.

Claim 3 (previously presented)

The process of Claim 2, wherein the amino dicarboxylic acid is glutamic acid or aspartic acid.

Claim 4 (previously presented)

The process of claim 1 wherein the alcohol of formula (I) is benzyl alcohol.

Claim 5 (previously presented)

The process of claim 1 wherein the temperature of the reaction is less than or equal to 80°C.

Claim 6 (previously presented)

The process of claim 1 wherein the benzyl alcohol or its derivative of formula (I) is used in an amount of 1.2 to 3 mol per mole of the amino dicarboxylic acid.

Claim 7 (previously presented)

The process of claim 1 wherein the alkanesulfonic acid is methanesulfonic acid.

Claim 8 (previously presented)

The process of claim 1 wherein the amount of alkanesulfonic acid used is 1.01 to 2 mol per mole of the amino dicarboxylic acid.

Claim 9 (previously presented)

The process of claim 1 wherein the solvent of the reaction is selected from the group consisting of aliphatic and aromatic and halogenated and nonhalogenated hydrocarbons.

Claim 10 (previously presented)

The process of claim 1 wherein the ω -benzyl ester of the amino dicarboxylic acid is obtained in the free form by bringing the alkanesulfonate of the ω -benzyl ester of the amino dicarboxylic acid into contact with an organic or inorganic base.

Claim 11 (previously presented)

The process of Claim 10, wherein the base is used in an amount sufficient to reach the isoelectric point of the ester to be obtained.

Claim 12 (previously presented)

The process of Claim 10 wherein the base is an aqueous ammonia solution.

Claim 13 (previously presented)

The process of claim 1 wherein the alkanesulfonate of the ω -benzyl ester of the amino dicarboxylic acid is crystallized before being converted to the free ω -benzyl ester of the amino dicarboxylic acid.

Claim 14 (currently amended)

The process of claim 1 wherein ~~the~~ a solvent/water azeotrope is distilled off at a temperature of less than 80°C.

Claim 15 (previously presented)

The process of claim 1 wherein the alkanesulfonate of the ω -benzyl ester of the amino dicarboxylic acid is isolated before being brought into contact with the base.

Claim 16 (previously presented)

The process of claim 1 wherein the alkanesulfonate of the ω -benzyl ester of the amino dicarboxylic acid is not isolated from the medium before this ester is released.

Claim 17 (previously presented)

The process of claim 1 wherein the alkanesulfonate of the ω -benzyl ester to be converted to the free ester is dissolved in water.

Claim 18 (currently amended)

The process of claim ~~1~~ 17 wherein a solvent for the benzyl alcohol derivative is added with the water or after the introduction of water ~~to the medium comprising the ester to be released~~ .

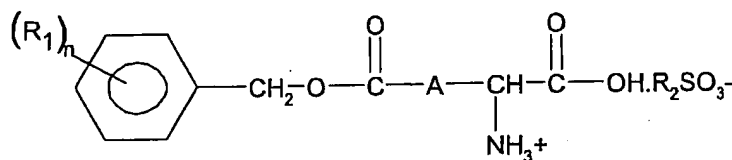
Claim 19 (previously presented)

The process of claim 1 wherein, after having reached the pH of the isoelectric point, the medium is heated.

Claim 20 (cancelled)

Claim 21 (currently amended)

Alkanesulfonate of Claim 20, having the formula



wherein R¹ is hydrogen or is the R¹(s) are individually selected from the group consisting of hydrogen, C₁ to C₄ alkyl, C₁ to C₄ alkoxy and halogen, A is selected from the group consisting of an aliphatic, cycloaliphatic, aryl, araliphatic or heterocyclic ~~the part of the molecule of an α-amino-carboxylic acid attached to the carbon in the α position and to the carboxyl group in the α position,~~ and R² is alkane residue of the alkanesulfonic acid.

Claim 22 (previously presented)

An alkanesulfonate of claim 21 wherein it is γ-benzyl glutamate methanesulfonate or β-benzyl aspartate methane sulfonate.